



This Week in Ellis Island History

July 28, 1920

Archibald Alec Leach passes inspection at Ellis Island. He traveled with the Bob Pender stage troupe as a stilt walker on the RMS Olympic for a two-year tour. When the troupe returned to England, he decided to stay in the U.S. and continue his stage career. He would later changed his name to Cary Grant, and become one of Hollywood's leading actors.



Cary Grant

July 30, 1916

A massive explosion destroys Black Tom Wharf, a shipping depot at Jersey City, New Jersey's waterfront. Seven people are killed when German saboteurs blow up munitions awaiting shipment to Germany's European enemies. The buildings at Ellis Island suffer damage costing nearly \$400,000 to repair. Five hundred people are evacuated from the island without serious injury.



Black Tom Wharf after the explosion

August 1, 1970

Sixty-three black men, women, and children belonging to a group called the National Economic Growth and Reconstruction Organization (NEGRO) end their thirteen day occupation of Ellis Island. Dr. Thomas W. Matthew organized the band of illegal squatters at Ellis Island, and announced his intentions to lease and perhaps eventually purchase the island from the National Park Service in order to develop it as a rehabilitation center for 2,500 drug addicts, alcoholics, ex-convicts and their families.



Ellis Island was in a state of abandoned disrepair by 1970